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AP Literature & Composition

Composition: Excuse

8 January 2010

Dear Cyprus,

Please excuse dear Othello for not all things have been well with him. The great and noble Moor indeed has committed a terrible crime under a *poisoned* mind. During this state of mind, he was convinced to murder his truly loyal wife, Desdemona. Othello was a most honest man, and believed other people are of the same mindset, which is why Othello trusted, whole-heartedly, the devious plot schemes and words spoken from the mouth of Iago. Before Othello died, he said that he “loved not wisely but too well,” and that his actions resulted not because he was “easily jealous, but, being wrought, / perplexed in the extreme” (V.ii.343-345). Excuse Othello for his actions because even Othello himself admitted that he loved too much and was tricked and fooled, driven to a point of jealousy, and based his decision on irrational thoughts and beliefs about his chaste wife, he too is only human and is subject to the horrible plague of jealousy. Iago played Othello for a fool, setting up Othello for this horrible failure. Iago made clear of his plans to destroy Othello for his own personal gain, and he did this by playing on Othello’s weaknesses. Iago desired to have Cassio’s rank at lieutenant, so was a plan to get rid of Cassio as well. Iago was thinking, and he said, “Cassio’s a proper man. Let me see now, / to get his place, and to plume up my will / in double knavery—How, how?—Let’s see. — / After some time, to abuse Othello’s ear / that he is too familiar with his wife” (I.iii.372-376). Shortly after, Iago mentions that “the Moor is of a free and open nature / that thinks men honest that but seem to be so, / and will as tenderly be led by the nose/ as asses are” (I.iii.379-382). Those spoken words of Iago were his whole-hearted plans to ruin Othello. The plot began with Iago subtly grabbing Othello’s attention and moving it directly to Cassio and Desdemona just to get him thinking. Iago said “Ha! I like not that” (III.iii.35). When Othello questioned Iago on what exactly he was talking about, Iago played it off, simply saying “Nothing, my lord. Or if—I know not what” (III.iii.37). Although Othello is still able to rationalize at this point, Iago now has Othello thinking and wondering about the chastity of his wife, Desdemona. As Iago kept edging Othello on in that manner, Othello finally comes to his last point of rational thinking, and demanded proof. Iago then conveniently had proof, asking Othello, “Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief / spotted with strawberries in your wife’s hand?” (III.iii.435-436). When Othello acknowledged that this was his first gift to Desdemona, Iago said “I know not that. But such a handkerchief— / I am sure it was your wife’s—did I today / see Cassio wipe his beard with” (III.iii.437-439), and this was all the more proof Othello needed. Cyprus, understand that because he was blinded by his love for Desdemona and trusted in everyone, as he knew himself trustworthy, Iago’s devilish plans easily succeeded in taking over the mind of Othello. Once the handkerchief seemed to be enough proof for Othello, Othello decided to ask Desdemona for it, and her response sealed the proof because she stated, “I have it not about me” (III.iv.47). From about this moment forward, Othello’s mind was unchangeable because jealousy had taken over until it was too late to realize the consequences of his actions. Othello did recognize his wrongdoing before he died, but that alone in no excuse for his behavior. Cyprus, you can excuse Othello for his account of severe mental issues. Iago, a near devil himself, created a monster of Othello, and brought Othello out of character, which is why he had committed that horrible murder of Desdemona. Therefore, as you can see, Othello’s free and open nature combined with his trustworthiness for the people around him is what led to his eventual mental breakdown. The great Othello was deeply in love with Desdemona, so much in love that the small and insignificant accusations by Iago on Cassio blinded Othello to Desdemona’s honesty and loyalty, and Iago temporarily turned Othello into a jealous monster. Excuse Othello from his atrocious actions for he knew not what he was doing; his mental capacity was overpowered, and he could do nothing about it. As we remember the tragic death of Desdemona, please do forgive and pardon dear Othello.

Sincerely,

Martin Roberts